

The Sextant

The Sextant is a publication produced by the International Office of the FHNW School of Business. People, projects and programmes with an international aspect related to the School of Business are the focus. It does not reflect the opinions of the School of Business, the FHNW or any other organisation.

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"Seminars Prepare for Profession"

International Student Projects a Gateway to Great Jobs

*Roberto Duarte profited greatly from his Focus India project team experience.
(Photo: Janine Wyler)*

Participating in the prestigious International Student Projects consistently leads to students not only being offered interesting jobs but also preparing them well for what is then expected of them. Roberto Duarte was in last year's Focus India project team and responsible for Communications and the Delegation. This experience contributed significantly to his being offered a post within KPMG's Digital Media team.

"Just before the Graduation Ceremony last October, I got the phone-call from KPMG saying that after 3 rounds of intense assessment, I had the job. During the process they had wanted to know a lot about the project – what did it involve, why did I do it, what were my responsibilities," Roberto remembers. "The real advantage is that I could respond to all their questions by giving examples of real situations and experience I'd had during the project. So when they asked about strengths and weaknesses, I could talk about real challenges we'd had."

As Roberto had been responsible for all the external communication during Focus India 2017, he had gained practice into producing video clips, writing blogs, managing communication. "I realised I wanted to work in Digital Media, not just Social Media and not just Marketing. When I saw the KPMG post and read their requirements, I realized I met all their requirements – thanks to my studies but very much also because of the project."

"Doing Focus India helped prepare me a lot for this post. In some very concrete ways – like one of the things I had to do was creating a concept for a clip, then, editing, filming which was exactly what I'd done before," Roberto recalls. "But above that, the project significantly contributed to my personal development – I had to work in a team and coordinate with the teams from the sister projects, so you learn about teams and collaboration and work ethics." Roberto is now part of the 5-person Digital Media team that works closely with the teams in Canada, the UK, Germany and Spain – so he is again in an international environment where the main language is English. "I'm loving it," he says.

Julia Bachmann had a similar trajectory. She was on last year's connectUS project team where her role was managing the on-site seminar. It was this experience of planning a very complex trip where 28 delegates went on company visits, workshops and talks to four US cities for 17 days that interested Zurich Insurance when she applied for their Graduate Programme. She was selected from over 100 applicants to be a Trainee in Customer Service Corporate Life & Pensions.

"They were very interested in my responsibilities during the project, in the challenges I'd faced and in my motivation. They liked that I hadn't done this for the credits or money and invested a lot of my own time. This showed flexibility," Julia comments. Like Roberto, she found that being able to give concrete examples of experiences during the project, helped considerably during interviews.

Equally, Julia has found that the experience gained on connectUS has prepared her well for the job. "Doing all the coordination with so many people made me strong and gave me confidence. I can do stuff and stand up for my own opinion."

Occasionally, ISP alumni meet their future employers directly during the project. Sometimes, however, it is more the basis for an extended network. Michael Simonet, a former Insight China project team member, claims contacts he made during the project allowed him to build up a reputation. It led to first working at Swissmoo in China. "This in turn allowed me to



Julia Bachmann was on the connectUS project team (Photo: Samira Lussi)

set up my own company in China. These days I head Qingdao Alea E-Commerce Ltd. and Swisscloud Consulting Ltd. (HK) which are specialized in operating Chinese marketplaces like JD.com, Tmall, Taobao (Alibaba), Xiaohongshu, suning.com etc. for our clients, Michael says.

Sometimes, the link is less direct and more about experience gained. Kim Hunziker, for instance, was in the PR Team of Focus India 2014. She is now Press & Media Assistant at the U.S. Embassy Bern. "During the interview I could constantly refer back to my Focus India experience where I'd written and created newsletters, done the social media and dealt with journalists," Kim remembers. "So I could constantly give good examples of experience I had and where challenges were faced. On my CV I had put this experience in bold letters to highlight the diverse skills and activities."

More often, participating in the ISP project teams adds a valuable USP on graduate's job applications. Luisa Pilla was in last year's exploreASEAN project team and responsible for the one-week Preparatory Seminar. She had, during her studies, already worked for Fredy's AG – a 180-employee bakery and food production company from Baden. Founder and owner Fredy Hiestand, who is deeply committed to sustainability and had set up Fredy's Plantation in the Ivory Coast, was looking for a successor Project Lead for the numerous moringa tree products. When he heard about Luisa's experience in the exploreASEAN team, he wanted to know more.

"There is a lot of affinity between aspects of exploreASEAN and Fredy's Plantation and there are similar challenges. For instance, my work in acquiring sponsors for the student project really helped me set up the moringa product in the b2b sector and acquiring customers. Both are start-ups in a way and I have to deal with many different aspects," Luisa reports. "Also, I've had to set up a dedicated website, and it helped that during the onsite seminar I had to deal with the blog for exploreASEAN. Both projects also have in common that it's about connecting people from different cultures in different locations." Luisa coordinates with the stakeholders in Ivory Coast and the sales in Switzerland, establishing and marketing the product line – 10% of earnings go to the Foundation. ■

The International Student Projects have gained significant prestige over the years – in fact, Federal Councillor Doris Leuthard opened this year's Preparatory Seminars and encouraged students to be inquisitive and go abroad. Under the overall management of Prof Michael Jeive, there are four projects (Insight China, Focus India, exploreASEAN and connectUS) which each have a supervisor to support the Project Teams. These 3-member teams have to acquire sponsors to co-finance the project, acquire participants, manage the finances, organize speakers, visits and workshops for the one-week Preparatory Seminars and similarly organize content for the 2-week on-site seminars including all travel arrangements. The teams have considerable independence. Two-member PR Teams support them.

Each year, the teams focus on aspects of doing business in their respective regions: This year they explored how companies managed globalization challenges. During the on-site seminars between 29 March and 14 April companies like Bosch, Accenture, Google, Huawei, Lenovo and Sandmaster were visited as well as universities such as Shenzhen Technology University, the Indonesian Institut Teknologi Bandung and the Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education (ITSEM) in Mexican Guadalajara. Additionally, each delegation included cultural visits – these are often to innovative (NPO) projects and schools.

For further information go to the individual websites (exploreasean.ch, focusindia.ch, insightchina.ch and connectus.ch). The application process for the 2019 Project Teams has started – deadline 19 May. Applications for delegation places and the PR teams follow at the start of the next semester.



On the final day of the preparatory Seminar, delegates from all 4 seminars can get to know companies, mostly sponsors, at a career fair.

MSc IM student Jonah Chellappa in top 5% of X-Culture Competition

Cultural Differences often Amplified in Teams



Jonah Chellappa (Photo: Janine Wyler)

"Leading an international team was eye-opening. We think we are very aware of cultural differences, but it's not until we're in a real situation that we become aware of our cultural biases." Jonah Chellappa speaks from experience. The MSc International Management student made it to the top 5% of over 4000 participants in the X-Culture Competition based on his work in an international, virtual team. He's now in the final stage of the Coaching Programme where he is one of seven coaches working as a team to provide feedback to current teams of international students in the X-Culture Competition.

The X-Culture Project, initiated by UNCG Bryan School of Business and Management professor Vas Taras, attracted about 5000 students from around the world this year. It aims to give students real practice in global business and cross-cultural management. Numerous companies, also from around the world, can become partners, paying to

have the student teams work on their business tasks.

"In the first round there was a choice of ten projects and then you join teams and embark on virtual consulting. I became the manager and coordinator of one team working on a brief from a Finnish company aiming to privatize the state school system," Jonah reports. "I became very sensitive to the different cultures. As a leader you try to create a neutral work environment for the group but even the smallest attitudinal differences become amplified in these conditions. I learnt a lot."

Jonah himself comes from two cultures. With a Swiss mother and an Indian father he spent his early childhood in Switzerland before returning to Chennai where he later did a BSc in Business Administration which included a year in Lille (France). After working for an NGO as a junior Marketing Manager, he started looking for a suitable

Master programme. "Switzerland was the last place I looked, somehow I hadn't imagined I would find the most suitable programme here," he smiles.

Based on individual and group evaluations plus an entrance test, the X-Culture jury selected the top 5% which included Jonah. Out of this elite, 400 students applied to join the coaching teams and 133 were accepted – out of these only 43 passed the test. Jonah achieved the 15th highest score. His team of seven coaches is now in the practical phase supporting the international teams working on a brief from a Peruvian adventure tourism company based in the Amazon. "There are weekly assignments and we coach the teams through these. As the teams are slightly bigger, it is a little less organized and a bigger challenge for me now. Everyone is very motivated and at a similar level of knowledge. Currently I'm learning how to give customer feedback which is neutral to all cultures."

Jonah's coaching assignment continues until the end of June. At that stage he has to deliver a video lecture and a webinar. "For the lecture, I'm concentrating on cross-cultural team management using Erin Meyer's culture map, Lewis' model on team behaviour and 5 other models to address issues I have experienced and how to address these," Jonah says. For the webinar he is producing a training module about referencing and sourcing as he himself experienced not being taught about citation during his Bachelor studies and appreciates the need for self-learning support.

When he completes his assignments he is an official X-Culture coach. "I could continue my training to become a Head Coach but I wish to concentrate on completing my studies here by spring 2019," he says. And then? "I would like to work with NGO's again. I have an idea about offering sustainability consulting for NGO's. CSR has become increasingly important, also for NGO's." ■

First Joint Swiss-Colombian Summer School

Between 13 – 26 August students and staff from both the Universidad EAFIT and the FHNW will delve into the world of entrepreneurship in both Colombia and Switzerland during a first joint summer school. Participants will first spend a week in Medellin and then fly to Basel for the second week. At both campuses there will be a mix of company visits, lectures, workshops, cultural activities and in mixed groups they will work on a business idea.

The pioneering idea evolved out of a trip to Colombia by a FHNW delegation late last year. Programme manager Prof Dr Rolf Meyer says participants will learn about innovative techniques and relevant tools to develop sustainable projects. "By



Universidad EAFIT (building at right) looks which out over the city of Medellin

working in interdisciplinary and intercultural teams, participants can get real and unique experience in what it's like to deal with other mindsets while working on ideas that can come from different fields of study," he said.

The teams will be mentored and they will receive input on such topics as developing business models, stakeholder dialogue, strategic planning

and persuasive communication. The 5 ECTS programme is full: there will be 15 participants from Switzerland and as many from Colombia. After a preparatory evening later in May, Swiss participants fly to Colombia for the start on 13 August. After sessions close on the Friday, participants from both Colombia and Switzerland have to arrive in Basel in time for the second week which runs from Tuesday, 21 August to Saturday 26 August. ■

Partner Profiles

The School of Business cooperates with 130 universities around the world. A full list is on www.fhnw.ch/business/international. Each issue of The Sextant profiles half a dozen of these partners.



Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands

Where Amsterdam, the capital of The Netherlands, is famous for its canals, numerous cultural highlights, the Red Light District, "coffee" shops and distinct architecture. It houses Rembrandt's Nightwatch and the Anne Frank House but is also famed for its lively graffiti scene. The Faculty of Business and Economics is in the south of greater Amsterdam (population 2.5 million).

Cooperation Student and lecturer exchange
Size 40 000 students of which 14 000 are in the Faculty of Business and Economics and of these there are 2 800 students from 70 nationalities at the Amsterdam School of International Business.

Study Fields Of the 21 bachelor programmes, 2 are taught entirely in English. A wide selection of courses is available, including Business of Sport and Entertainment, Global Trade and Supply Chain Management, Entrepreneurship.

Campus The Faculty of Business and Economics is located in the south of the greater metropolitan area with teaching buildings including a library, restaurant, café and a bookshop. There are numerous clubs and organisations, and students can join the University of Amsterdam sports facilities. The university assists with accommodation in housing close to the Business campus. The two main blocks include either private rooms or shared apartments.

Website <http://www.amsterdamuas.com/faculty/fbe/faculty-of-business-and-economics.html>



Ajou University, South Korea

Where Suwon is a large (population 1.2 million) city only about 30 km away from capital city Seoul. A significant cultural and industrial centre it is also the only remaining walled city in Korea. Suwon is a major education hub – Ajou university is one of 11 universities in the city. Another interesting aspect is that the city is proud of its public lavatories – there is a dedicated bus tour of all facilities.

Cooperation Student exchange
Size About 15 000 students of which just over two-thirds at undergraduate level. About 800 international students.

Study Fields About 30% of all courses are taught in English (so about 250). At the School of Business Administration there are programmes in Business Administration, - E-Business and Financial Engineering. There are Korean language and culture courses.

Campus Campus is large with many teaching buildings, libraries, a hospital, restaurants, gym, a supermarket, tennis courts, athletics tracks and fields and other sports facilities. There are five (gender segregated) dormitories on campus: two of these are for international students.

Website www.ajou.ac.kr/en



IBS, Beijing Foreign Studies University, China

Where China's capital mega-city Beijing has a population of 17 billion and covers about 17 000 square kilometres on the north-east coast. This means there is a wealth of interesting cultural sights (Forbidden City, Heavenly Temple, the Bird's Nest stadium, the hutongs, the Great Wall of (China) though this is outside the city) but also that there is a lot of traffic (mind the bicycles) and smog. Endless shopping, hot pot and other restaurants, street food.

Cooperation Student exchange
Size At the IBS there are 2 000 students of which 400 are international or exchange students. (At the BFSU there are 8 000, including 1 200 internationals).

Study Fields Within the International Business School (IBS) five bachelor programmes are taught in English: International Business, International Economics & Trade, Chinese Business Studies, International Marketing and International Finance. BFSU is a high reputation university.

Campus The campus with classrooms, library, some sports facilities and restaurants is centrally located. The swimming pools are filled with natural hot thermal spring water. Student accommodation is available nearby, in a variety of dormitories with single or shared rooms. Homestay is another option as is the "extended family" where it is possible to meet Chinese families for different activities. There is a Student Union which organizes many activities, and there are sports and leisure clubs including a film club, a Glee club and a comic and animation club. BFSU has its own hospital.

Website solbridge.bfsu.edu.cn



Cal State University Los Angeles, USA

Where Los Angeles is a huge, sprawling city on the Californian coast with an estimated population of about 19 million people. It is, of course, the home of Hollywood and all the affiliated industries of film, but is also renowned for all the sports and sporting facilities it offers.

Cooperation Student and lecturer exchange
Size Around 24 000 students
Study Fields Virtually all courses at the university (a range of 129 bachelor programmes) are open to exchange students - with a few exceptions only. Of course, this includes the full range of business and economics topics but students can also explore the fields of, for instance, humanities or archeology.

Important is to read up on course requirements beforehand. There is a useful search function within the course catalogue.

Campus Campus Cal State Los Angeles (CSULA) is on a 175 acre campus (!) and offers virtually all imaginable facilities including academic, social, cultural and sporting. International students can apply for on campus housing – however there are many other housing options.

Website www.calstatela.edu



Universidad de Montevideo, Uruguay

Where Montevideo, Uruguay's capitol, lies on a beautiful stretch of coast. Although about 1.3 million people live there, it is considered a smaller city with a centre full of cafes, bars, restaurants and cultural offers. The architecture is a mix of very modern and the Spanish-Portuguese history the city has. Last year it was ranked top in life quality in Latin America in the Mercer report.

Cooperation Student and lecturer exchange
Size UM is a modern, smaller private university with 7 faculties.

Study Fields A full range of Business subjects are available in Spanish (but students must meet Spanish language requirements or take language courses there) but there are also many courses taught in English: these might include subjects like Microeconomics, Corporate Finance, Marketing.

There are also courses within the Faculty of Law which can be suitable, e.g. Resolving International Business Disputes or International Trade Contracts.

Campus The campus is relatively small with a library, a canteen and a computer room. There is an international students organization (MIS) which also offers trips and excursions. A buddy system is in place. There is no on-campus housing – the International office can help students find accommodation, including host families.

Website <http://www.um.edu.uy/>



University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Where Slovenia's capital city (population 288 000) sits in a basin surrounded by two mountain ranges and enjoys a subtropical climate. Key sights include the castle, many interesting bridges and squares.

Included in the annual 10 000 cultural events in the city, are those generated by lively sub-cultures: there is the autonomous Metelkova district and the Šiška Cultural Quarter with numerous alternative galleries, nightclubs and experimental venues.

Cooperation Student and lecturer exchange
Size With about 64 000 students at 22 faculties, this is one of Europe's largest universities.

Study Fields There is a wide range of over 80 courses at the Faculty of Economics such as Principles of Consumer Behaviour, Tourism Management, Operations Management and Global Economy at Bachelor level (there is also a good range of courses at Master level). These are taught in English and the level of language competence among both faculty and students is good. The university has prestigious triple international accreditation.

Campus The central city buildings are mostly for teaching, have a library and a small cafeteria. Students get discount coupons which can be used at most restaurants. The university has dormitories (shared rooms) or there are affordable apartments in the city.

Website www.ef.uni-lj.si/en

Erasmus+ Suspension of Switzerland – will it end in 2020?

UAS's must meet next Challenges



IRUAS participants network during a break at the conference. (Photo: Barbara Binz)

A stunning 17% of students at Swiss tertiary institutions are international – this is three times the OECD average. Considering that Switzerland was suspended from the Erasmus+ exchange scheme in 2014, this statistic affirms the success of the hard work especially of the International Offices. In 2021, the EU will launch the Erasmus+ succession scheme and a large conference of International Offices at Swiss universities of applied sciences focused on the upcoming challenges.

Under the motto of Internationalisation 2.0, more than 100 IRUAS (International Relations of the Universities of Applied Sciences and Arts) members came to Olten at the start of the spring semester to focus on initiatives and strategies to meet the next challenges of remaining attractive for not only EU but global partner universities. Topics presented and discussed at the 2-day conference included the utilization of digital channels, creating cooperation project and various instruments different universities use to increase internationalisation.

Important input came from guest and current European Association for International Education (EAIE) president, Markus Laitinen who talked about current trends. Internationalisation has become more complex, he said, with the emergence of different kinds of partnerships, different types of mobility and the increased expectations. "International Offices are not (or should not be) the only places supporting and being involved in internationalization. A continuous development is necessary, internationalisation requires increased professionalism, staff training and effective networking," he said. Laitinen also noted that institutions were becoming more selective with their partnerships. He recommended that Swiss universities become more involved in the EAIE activities and disseminate their expertise in articles and blogs. ■

¹ This statistic covers both international and exchange students at both academic universities and universities of applied sciences (source: swissinfo.ch, 3 January 2018).

17 MSc students off to European Innovation

A sizeable cohort of MSc International Management students has been selected to participate in the European Innovation Academy this summer. During three weeks in Cascais (Portugal) participants will join other students from around Europe to develop innovative ideas and create a portfolio or a business plan and submit these to a prestigious jury. The top ten ideas will be selected, pitched, and the winning team is financed to launch the product or service.

The non-profit initiative of, primarily, Stanford University, UC Berkeley and Google offers students inputs from academic and business speakers and mentoring from distinguished Silicon Valley executives. These inputs include topics such as Growth Hacking Strategies, Customer Growth Design and Finance & Funding Strategies. The academy also works closely together with business partners.

One of the participants, Jonah Chellappa, explained that all students would initially be put into a big room. "I do have an idea myself, but I think it might be good to be part of another team as it will present a bigger learning curve," he said.

The academy will have 500 participants from 75 countries and have 90 speakers and mentors. Msc IM dean Prof Dr Lynn Lim believes the academy creates unique opportunities for her students in developing business ideas in an international environment.

To date there have been 15 000 alumni of the academy and a total of 215 universities and 100 companies are in the academy network. For further information about the academy go to <https://www.inacademy.eu/portugal/> ■

#IMBoss: Funds for Vietnamese Youth



Prof Robert Buttery auctions off alumnus Tobias Anliker (Photos: Serina Danz)

Bidding frenzies reigned at this year's Bid for a Boss event in April. Ten "bosses" offered a variety of professional or cultural opportunities which lead to nearly CHF 3000 being raised. The majority of this will go to the charity SALTorg – the NPO arm of the FHNW's South East Asia Centre – which in collaboration with local schools awards scholarships to disadvantaged children and youth in Vietnam. Some funds go to the IM Alumni (the organisers of this event) Graduation Prize which recognizes social contributions to the IM programme culture. Popular offers this year included VIP and backstage passes to the Baden Jazz Festival, personal consulting sessions with lunch, a private hatha yoga session, an opportunity to conduct a symphony orchestra. The evening including entertaining networking activities and a Instagram photo competition. More info at www.imalumni.com ■



Who's Where?



Francesca Calcaterra, administrator of the part-time BSc in Business Administration programme (in German) in Basel, who participated in a Joint International Week for staff in both Bratislava and Vienna from 16 – 21 April. (Photo: Janine Wyler)

This is the third time I've gone on an international week. Even though my work here doesn't have strong international dimensions, these staff weeks deliver a great deal of learning and added value for me because I am gaining insights into how other university staff handle aspects of my work. For instance, I am responsible for the graduation ceremonies. In Basel we don't have a large enough space on campus so we always go to the Elisabethenkirche, so it was interesting to hear from the other 18 participants how they handle these events. Of course, some of them have huge facilities – there was someone from Kenya and they have a 100 hectare campus which has its own bus services. So space for graduation ceremonies is not an issue - that is a world I can't even imagine.

Another interesting topic for me was how countries which are considered less attractive for international or exchange students, market themselves. This was especially the case for the Eastern European countries. One strategy is to hold short summer schools, pitch them as inexpensive, combine with tourism agencies and then have participants make short video clips which are posted on social media. This works really well. Another thing that impressed me was a small pocket guide that the Vienna University of Economics and Business produces – it contains all sorts of basic facts about both the city and the university with QR codes and it fits into a wallet. That might be something for us to consider. Even in the German-speaking Business Administration

programme we are increasingly approached by foreign students - many from Germany but also from all over Europe.

There are of course aspects where we in Switzerland are very strong: Generally we are very well organized and have clear, defined processes. I was amazed to hear that there are universities which have no Examination Office. At one place, each lecturer individually organises times that students can come and inspect the exams and discuss with the lecturer for one hour. None of this is coordinated among lecturers so I asked what happens if there are overlaps – well, that is then just bad luck for the student.

The whole week was amazing. It was a great mix of input, visits, workshops and of course a lot of opportunity to network and talk with the other participants. The first two-and-a-half days were at our partner university in Bratislava and then we transferred to Vienna for the rest of the week. This joint programme proved extremely popular – apparently, there were 100 people applying for just 20 places. What was also different was that people came from all over the world instead of just from Europe. We had participants from various university departments from Canada, Kenya, Albania, South Africa, Finland, Hungary, Denmark, France, China, Germany, Czech Republic, Spain and me from Switzerland.

being at higher eye-level than me. It was so strange. He was my age, had long hair, looking like a surfer dude you know, but was treating me as if, well, as if I was a king. It was very awkward for me.

The issues in Japan at the moment centre on fears of what North Korea and China might be up to. They want to build up their own army, opt out of their defence contract with the USA and most of the young people here are very much in favour of militarisation. The issues we currently have in Europe are not of great interest here. I've been very involved in an NGO, BAAS, which provides schooling on Chios, the island very close to the Turkish coast where floods of refugees arrive. As they are often then stuck there for years, it is important to provide purpose so we run a primary and a secondary school plus a youth centre. It's unbelievable but many of these children, perhaps 10 or 12 years old, have never been to school. When my semester abroad is over, I'll take up my volunteering again. Do I miss anything? Well, I'm a flexible vegetarian, if that's the word, I eat very few meat products and certain other animal products and that's just as well as they don't understand the concept of vegetarianism here. Everything is meat or fish based. However, they do make the most delicious fish so that's what I'm mostly eating here. A fellow student just invited me to a cheese fondue party – mmmh, might skip that and stick to fish while I'm here.



Christoph Bigler, BSc International Management student in semester 5 who participated in the Intensive Programme Abroad on Central and Eastern Europe which travelled to Belgrade in April (Photo: Samira Lussi)

I remember making food packages with my mother when I was quite young and that it was connected to a civil war. But I never really knew where these parcels were going. Later I realized it was about former Yugoslavia. I think, generally, people here know more about countries far away than about countries close to us, like in Central and Eastern Europe. We know a little about the conflicts, about the refugees and that it's cheaper over there. But, for instance, when we think of IT outsourcing, we automatically think of India: However, Poland and Serbia also are highly competent in this area.

Because I was interested in this region and because this IPA is shorter than the international student projects, I joined the programme. There was a short preparatory seminar and then from 1 to 5 April we had the on-site seminar based in Belgrade. We also have to write a paper to gain the 3 ECTS. There were 12 of us as well as the seminar lecturer, Marcel Hirsiger. The programme is a really good mix of business and organizational visits and of course cultural aspects.

We arrived on 1 April which was Easter Sunday here – but Easter is a week later in Serbia. So on that first day we met with the Serbian-Swiss Chamber of Commerce and with the Erasmus Student Network and these two visits gave a great insight into some key aspects of the country. For instance, despite the high standards of education, there are limited professional opportunities for graduates – about a quarter are unemployed.

A highlight for me was the visit to Namics, an IT service provider and a start-up originally from St Gallen University. The Managing Director Belgrade, Jan Keller, from Switzerland, talked mostly about working with mixed teams as they have offices in Switzerland, Germany and Serbia. This ensured an extension of knowledge with members from each of these teams bringing different strengths in programming the platforms they build. Interestingly, he mentioned that one challenge had been language. Often the Swiss and the Germans inadvertently continued conversations in German which Serbian colleagues could not follow. Possibly they forgot to speak English because it is a new situation for them.



Dr Reece Garcia, Senior Lecturer in Employment Relations and HRM at Manchester Metropolitan University (UK) (Photo: Samira Lussi)

There were three big pulls to come to the FHNW School of Business: overlaps in teaching and research with colleagues here at the PMO Institute, the higher education infrastructure in Switzerland, and of course Switzerland itself, both for its natural beauty and your direct democracy. During my week here in Olten I will be meeting with colleagues from PMO and we'll be discussing the core competences shared by both this institution and mine at home in Manchester, and the potential for collaboration. Amongst those competencies is the questioning of the role of HR at the strategic level, to compare how the HR function in Switzerland attempts to gain legitimacy at boardroom level with the situation in the UK. Switzerland has tempered the effects of the global recession much more effectively than the UK, where HR has become synonymous with large-scale redundancies across many industries, rather than being viewed as an 'employee champion'. As one other example, we will discuss employment relations in Switzerland compared with the UK, where trade unions remain an important area of study with regard to advocating and promoting workers' rights.

I have been blown away by the infrastructure and technology you have here at FHNW. The students are clearly engaged as a result, as it is very busy considering that this is a holiday period. The emphasis on sustainability and clear regard for the environment is noticeable as soon as you enter the Olten campus. I will be looking more closely at your teaching methods so that we can share 'best practice' used in the classroom. Given the use of advanced technology here I am particularly interested in the blended learning approach described on the FHNW website. Apart from meeting with people on campus, I've been going out into the local community and speaking with employers and employees. Yesterday I spoke with those in Olten (traditionally considered to be a 'working class' town), this afternoon will be visiting Solothurn (whom I'm told are more 'upper class'), before finishing in Biel/Bienne (with a larger African migrant population) to gain a representative insight into the experiences of working people in northwest Switzerland. I will be encouraging MMU students to follow suit in the not-too-distant future!



Joël Bertschi, BSc in International Business Management student, currently on a semester abroad at the Nagoya University in Japan.

Although I'm also taking classes on business topics, the thing that interests me most is learning Japanese and becoming acquainted with Japanese culture. It is of course very different - how differently people interact in public and in private is especially interesting. There's this extreme politeness in public but when they get to know you better, you discover there's more honesty and they are like us. Fairly much at the beginning of my semester I was staying at a hostel and there were four Japanese guys standing on the balcony, having a smoke, laughing and joking. My Japanese was limited but I understood a little of what they were saying. Then, they saw me and suddenly the whole interaction changed. One of the guys addressed me, became extremely polite, was bowing the whole time, avoiding

Generally, people here are not used to European strangers, they often stop and stare and seem almost to be scared of me. I'm not the only foreigner at the university, but numbers are low. There are 10 of us in the Master classes but seven are from Papua so not white like myself and the others are some Australian students. We live in a guesthouse, quite centrally and we have a pool and a gym. Not many of the local students use the pool as it's overlooked and they don't like that – but they do use the gym. However, they use it to study as it's got air conditioning. The heat is bearable – but the traffic is horrendous.

There were two main motivations to do my dual degree here: I wanted to do something a little different, to create a USP for myself and then there was my interest in Life Sciences. I had worked for Abbott in Allschwil and became very interested in the industry. The dual degree was with the Indonesian International Institute for Life Sciences and while I'm here, apart from attending some classes, I am working on two projects. My thesis focusses on analyzing premium chocolate companies in both Indonesia and Switzerland and what motivates customers when buying. The other is a research project in bio-fossils for an Indonesian company which has developed rapidly and now needs to decide whether to invest in expensive equipment, and which particular products for which companies they should focus on. This is very technical and language is a barrier. I'm responsible for Taiwan and Korea and because I spent a semester abroad in Korea I do have some knowledge of Korean. I really like the close connection we have with the company and it's very interesting to be part of the product development and put forward our ideas.

A really great aspect of my time here is that I joined the university diving club. This weekend we're off to Pramuka where I will do my advanced diving licence. Apparently there is the wreck of a Japanese boat from World War 2 and I'm really looking forward to the experience of exploring that. I started diving 10 years ago but didn't manage to do much the last years. In two weeks we go for a longer diving trip to Ambon in the east of the Indonesia. I'm also currently helping the club prepare a fundraising event. I won't be here for the actual event, unfortunately, as I have to return to Switzerland in June. I was given 4 months unpaid leave from my part-time job to do this semester and have to return for that. However, I'll be back in October for a fortnight.

Living and studying here I do face several challenges. The biggest is language. Not that many people speak English and so I walk around with lots of notes on words and phrases so I can get by. Meanwhile I've learnt some basics and I have local friends who help.

A Day in the Life of Theo Whitwill



Theo Whitwill as quizmaster this month. (Photo: Samira Lussi)

Theo Whitwill has just been elected for a second term as President of the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) Switzerland. He works 60% for the International Office at the FHNW School of Business and is an alumnus of the BSc International Management programme.

If I had a late night, then I try to maximise my sleep and get up a little later. This means giving myself only half an hour to shower and dress and grab my toothbrush. So, coffee was bought at the station and teeth-brushing was done at work. Typically, today was a nice blend of my roles and tasks. I spent a few hours in the office – I'm in charge of the administration of everything related to incoming students which includes things like dealing with nominations, applications, grants, visas and information. Then I met up for lunch with Ruonan and Esin. I was Ruonan's buddy when she came to Switzerland from China to study and I had just started my studies here. She now works in Amsterdam but came to visit and join us for a meeting in Lausanne. Esin is both HR and Diversity Manager at Pernod Ricard and the President of the IM Alumni Association. Her company has a CSR project called Responsible Party which is one of ESN's main partners and will be part of the biggest ESN event we have each year, the Titanic Lémanique gala cruise. It'll be held on 19 May this year and 800 students, mostly on

exchange here in Switzerland, will be coming. We travelled to Lausanne to meet up with Olivia who manages this event and discussed the various activities and games that will be available to encourage the party participants to drink responsibly. Mostly it involves animation to drink more water. It's great to have contacts in various networks and use these – this is an extremely important part of my ESN presidency.

I never imagined originally that my career path would lead in this direction. After my semester abroad in Hong Kong I'd envisaged improving my Chinese and seeking employment there. I'd joined ESN during my studies and became president of the Olten section. Next, I found myself standing for the Swiss presidency. My motto is professionalising ESN Switzerland. The opportunities are unique. Over the past year we've been writing a manifesto addressed to the European Union. ESN is a network of about 15 000 volunteers looking after 200 000 exchange students each year. Many officials still have the impression we're a party organisation, but this is outdated. We're an organisation that champions international education and next to social and tourism events, we also contribute towards training and education. So one project I'm really investing in is a survey with the aim of monetising the value of ESN. We're researching the number of hours volunteers contribute, what they

do and for which causes, creating a fact sheet for all the partners we have, describing processes, projects, roles and how much our services would cost if done by paid employees. We're all volunteers, so it's unpaid, and currently we have to work with tiny budgets and ESN'ers often pay for things out of their own pockets even though we're creating immense value. If universities and national agencies had to pay for all we do it would add up to significantly more than what we currently receive per year.

An issue we have is that there is naturally a big turnover in volunteers each year, as people finish their studies. This is one reason why I decided to stand for another year – I have a few projects on the go and we have a great team. We have a strap line which is Unity in Diversity, Diversity in Unity. Our organisation has so many different people with different interests, but we're the ERASMUS generation and have a vision of how working together could be. I go to many conferences and meetings throughout Europe and constantly rediscover that we all tick the same way.

Luckily, my job at the International Office allows a certain flexibility in working times so that I can go to all the conferences for ESN. My dual roles create many synergies which benefit both the school and ESN. For instance, I'm off on a business to the UK soon to visit two of the school's UK partners, while I will also have the opportunity to meet up with their ESN sections and give both parties advice. I've become passionately interested in advocating international education and this is where I see my professional development. I don't envisage staying with ESN past this second year, since I would like to eventually increase my paid workload.

There is time left for hobbies. I'm a quizmaster at an Irish pub in Lenzburg. I started there as a bartender while I was studying. I love trivia, I'm the sort of person who's always going through Google maps, getting lost on Wikipedia. I love quirky questions – of course there are sources when you write the quiz but if I have time, then I write my own questions. I also love entertaining so when the opportunity came to be the quizmaster I grabbed the chance. The quiz has become so popular that it overfills a pub in Lenzburg on a Monday evening. I also love going to the cinema, I'm a Star Wars fan and a big Whovian. And, I'm a Liverpool supporter. A further interest is "Das Schwarze Auge" – a collaborative role-playing game. Every 3 to 4 weeks, together with about 6 friends, we sit down with pen and paper, our phones are off, we complete quests and are totally immersed in a fantasy world. ■

Brigitte Sprenger